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# THE GRADUAL CONVERSION OF EUROPE.

A Paper

READ AT THE

ANNUAL MEETING of the SOCIETY for the PROPAGATION  
of the GOSPEL in FOREIGN PARTS, April 28, 1875.



BY THE

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## THE GRADUAL CONVERSION OF EUROPE.

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WE are told it was a theory of Warburton's that the origin of Gothic Cathedrals might be traced to an imitation of the overarching forests of the ancient Germans. Respecting this theory Dean Milman observes in his *History of Latin Christianity*,<sup>1</sup> that Warburton must have supposed Gothic architecture was a thing of the fourth or fifth centuries, or must have quietly annihilated all the intervening centuries up to the twelfth.

But Warburton's theory is not more remarkable than that of those who seem to imagine that the Conversion of Europe was an achievement of the Apostolic or sub-Apostolic age ; that, as it has been expressed, "once upon a time a man, *i.e.*, S. Paul, landed on the shore of Europe determined to convert it, and he did convert it, for the work was done after some sort, if not quite as it should be." The Conversion of Europe appears to be regarded in some quarters as an event of speedy accomplishment, which may be favourably contrasted with the slow progress of modern Missions, and which may be pleaded in justification of the opinion that they are more or less a failure.

Now, as is shown in the paper<sup>2</sup> read at a former Annual Meeting of this Society, that "History is an excellent cordial for a drooping courage," that a comparison of the proportion of the Christian population to the whole human race in the middle of the third century with its proportion at the present day, affords no ground for discouragement as regards modern Missions, but quite the contrary, so I propose, roughly and briefly, to show that the same

<sup>1</sup> Milman's *Latin Christianity*, vol. ix. p. 296, n.

<sup>2</sup> *Comparative Progress of Ancient and Modern Missions.* By Professor Lightfoot.



lesson may be drawn from a retrospect of the history of the Gradual Conversion of Europe.

I call it the "Gradual Conversion of Europe," for how long a space of time did it take for its accomplishment? Was it the third, the sixth, or the eighth century that saw it brought about?

The eighth century did not see even the half of Europe won over, even in the most nominal form, to the Cross of Christ. *Fifteen centuries were destined to run their course before it could be said that this was true of the whole of Europe;* and even then in many places the results achieved were very partial—nay, in the extreme North, Christianity did not become the popular religion till the sixteenth and even the seventeenth centuries.<sup>1</sup>

But from such a general survey let me come to particulars; let me break up this long interval into periods of smaller and more manageable dimensions.

(i.) Let me speak first of the Conversion of the Roman Empire.

We talk of the triumph of the great apostle, S. Paul, but we forget altogether his trials, his disappointments, and the comparative paucity of converts he succeeded in making in some of the most important centres of Roman civilization. Were the countries immediately bordering on the Mediterranean Sea—the home of the old world and its heathen culture—Greece, Italy, Gaul, and Spain—won over in a day? The "Man of Macedonia" stands in vision before the Apostle at Troas, about A.D. 52, and obedient to the Divine Call he preaches the word in Europe, at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Malta, Rome, and through his disciples in Dalmatia<sup>2</sup> and Crete,<sup>3</sup> if not in Spain<sup>4</sup> and Britain;<sup>5</sup> but *upwards of three hundred and forty years were to elapse*, before what had been the consolation of the slave and of the fugitive in the Catacombs became the creed of the statesmen and the magistrate. That the Church triumphed at all must remain the mystery of mysteries, unless her Founder was all that He claimed to be; but how gradually, making due allowance for the rhetoric of enthusiasm in some passages of Justin<sup>6</sup> and Tertullian,<sup>7</sup> was the triumph won! The Word, indeed

<sup>1</sup> See Guericke, *Kirchengesch.*, ii. pp. 355, 356; Hardwick's *Church History, Middle Age*, p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 10.

<sup>3</sup> Titus i. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Clem. Rom. *Ep. ad. Cor.*

<sup>5</sup> Fabricius, *Lux Evang.* p. 407.

<sup>6</sup> Justin, *Dial.* c. 117.

<sup>7</sup> Tertull. *Apol.* 37; *Adv. Jud.* 7.

ran very swiftly, but it was the Word of Him, Whose earthly life had been spent in an obscure village of Galilee, never hurrying, never precipitating, biding His time, waiting patiently till His hour was come.<sup>1</sup> How true a figure of the Church's progress was "the leaven hidden in the measures of meal!"<sup>2</sup> What a mystery surrounds the planting of some of the earliest churches! Was it an evangelist like Pantænus or Frumentius, or some Christian captive, some Christian colonist, some Christian soldier, that first preached the Word in Gaul and Spain? Who can tell? For what a weary period, as it must have seemed to the faithful of those days, did the early Church work her way, in the literal sense of the word, "underground, under camp and palace, under senate and forum, as unknown and yet well known, as dying and behold it lived!"<sup>3</sup>

And even when "the still, small Voice," had made itself heard, and "the weakness of God" had proved itself "stronger than man;"<sup>4</sup> when the Church had passed through the terrible Era of the Persecutions; when Apologists, like Irenæus and Cyprian, Origen and Tertullian, had justified the claims of the New Faith to be the "True Philosophy;" when the Fathers of the East had moulded the Creeds, and the Empire of the West had bequeathed to the Church its organization and its laws; when with Constantine Christianity had been publicly recognised as the religion of the State; and with Theodosius its supremacy had been established; can the proportion of Christians even in some of the chief towns of Greece, Italy, Gaul, and Spain, be said to have been other than still small?<sup>5</sup> Is it not a striking fact that, at the close of the fourth century, after Christianity had enjoyed during more than sixty years the sunshine of imperial favour, the Christians at Antioch,<sup>6</sup> a city which had greater advantages than any other, constituted only about half of the population, and that more than fifty years after the conversion of Constantine, the cultivated and influential classes of old Latin Rome still remained heathen,<sup>7</sup> while the word "peasant" was synonymous with "unbeliever"?

<sup>1</sup> John i. 4; Luke ii. 51, 52.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. xiii. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Dean Stanley's *Introductory Lecture on Ecclesiastical History*, p. xxxviii.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Cor. i. 25.

<sup>5</sup> In the middle of the third century we may reasonably infer that native Gaul was not more Christian than native India is at the present time.—Canon Lightfoot, *Comparative Progress*, p. 7.

<sup>6</sup> Comp. S. Chrysostom ii. 567, vii. 810.

<sup>7</sup> In the fifth century, Leo, Bishop of Rome, deplores the deep corruption even of Christian society, and adjures his flock not to fall back into heathenism... The old heathen cultus, particularly that of the Sun (*Sol invictus*), had formally entwined itself with the Christian worship of God. Many Christians, before

(ii.) But the close of the reign of Theodosius brings us to the Era of the Barbarian Irruption, when races, which had long roamed their native deserts unnoticed and unheeded, Goths and Franks, Burgundians and Saxons, were thrust into the place which the bright and polished children of the South had proved themselves unworthy to occupy, when for a time chaos seemed to have come back to earth, and strange tribes, speaking a strange language, were precipitated over the entire face of Europe to fill the abyss of servitude and corruption, in which the Roman Empire had disappeared.

True it is that already in the marvellous providence of God an Ulphilas and Severinus had penetrated their savage forests, and sown here and there amongst the new races the seeds of Christian civilization, before they took up their position on the ruins of the Empire. True it is that arrived within the Imperial frontier, "they paused, like those ancient Gauls in the Roman Forum, admired the venerable image of a spiritual Power, which claimed their submission at the same moment that it tendered them its own,"<sup>1</sup> and were evangelised so silently that scarcely a legend or a record remains to tell the tale. But it is to be remembered that we must wait till the close of the sixth and the opening of the seventh century before we hear of any real efforts being made to diffuse the Faith among the masses of heathendom lying beyond the Rhine, and when they were made they were not due to Continental Churches, but to Missionaries, who proceeded from our own British Isles, high up in the Northern Seas, then almost forgotten amidst the desolating contests, which were breaking up the Roman World.

We are proud, and justly proud, of the influence of our own insular Church on the evangelization of the Continental world, but we are apt to forget how slowly and with what difficulty the winning over of these islands themselves was brought about. From the year A.D. 431, when S. Patrick the Apostle of Ireland, commenced his labours, till the day when the men of Sussex, the last remnant of a heathen people in England,<sup>2</sup> were gathered into the Christian fold by Wilfrid, upwards of 250 years passed away. And when this work was accomplished, with what vicissitudes had the triumph been chequered! What inequalities of progress, what alternations of success and failure it had exhibited!

True it is that, shut out by a barrier of Arianism, no less than by

entering the basilica of St. Peter, were wont to mount the platform, in order to make their obeisance to the rising luminary. See Merivale's *Conversion of the Northern Nations*, App. p. 79.

<sup>1</sup> Merivale's *Conversion of the Northern Nations*, p. 103.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 681—686; Bede, *Ecl. Hist.* iv. 13.

the physical barrier of the sea and the Alps, from the great Church on the banks of the Tiber, Celtic Christianity flung itself with a fiery zeal, which seemed to take the world by storm, on the rocky shores of the Western Highlands, amongst the barbarous Picts, the Hebrides, the Orkney Isles, Strathclyde, and Cumbria, as also the smaller British states which occupied what we now call Wales, but what a check its onward progress here received !

The conquest of Britain by the pagan English—more pagan than any other of the conquering races of the North—had thrust a wedge of heathendom between the Celtic Church and the Churches of the West ; and even when Augustine landed in the Isle of Thanet and recalled the new England into the Commonwealth of nations, how slowly did the evangelization of the country proceed ! Even when the under-kings of Essex and East-Anglia had received the creed of their over-lord Æthelbert, the prospects of the Church were soon darkened by the restoration of the pagan worship.<sup>1</sup> At one moment Laurentius was ready to give up even the Kentish mission in despair<sup>2</sup> ; in Essex, for forty years, the faith, after being received, either languished in secret, or was utterly subverted<sup>3</sup> ; in East Anglia, for three years, the progress of the Church was almost everywhere stopped ; in Northumbria, when a partial success had been achieved, a Penda destroyed every trophy of the Gospel ;<sup>4</sup> while in Sussex paganism entrenched itself for years as in its last stronghold, nor was it till hard upon the close of the seventh century that it yielded to the preaching of Wilfrid.<sup>5</sup>

It is indeed undeniable that the Cross ultimately triumphed ; that the organization of the episcopate was followed by the organization of the parish system ; that the mission stations gradually disappeared, and the missionaries became settled clergy ; that the poems of Cædmon already showed “the new grandeur, depth, and fervour of tone which the German race was to give to the religion of the East ;” but it was not the work of one or two, but of *many years* ; and success and defeat, progress and failure, repeatedly alternated, and oftentimes many a devoted labourer, whether of the Latin and Celtic Communions, must have been sorely tempted to despair.

(iii.) But at this point we may once more return to the Continent. The agents whom the providence of God had prepared for

<sup>1</sup> Bede, *Ecccl. Hist.* ii. 5 ; Lappenberg i. 143, n.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 616 ; Bede, *Ecccl. Hist.* ii. 6.

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 616—653 ; Bede, *Ecccl. Hist.* iii. 22.

<sup>4</sup> Bede, *Ecccl. Hist.* iii. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Bede, *Ecccl. Hist.* iv. 13.

the evangelization of Germany and of the lands bordering on the Baltic were now ready. Before this, indeed, the Celtic disciples of Columba had crossed the sea, and preached the Word amongst tribes of pagan Suevi on the shores of the lake of Zurich and amidst the dense pinewoods of the Black Forest. But they were rather hermits than missionaries.<sup>1</sup> The time was come for Wilfrid,<sup>2</sup> and Ecgbert,<sup>3</sup> and Willibrord,<sup>4</sup> and many other sons of the English Church, to go forth, and, Teutons themselves, to preach to Teutons in the persuasive accents of their own tongue.

But did they find the work easy, or the victory rapid and complete?

On the contrary, the contest with heathendom was long, arduous, and exhausting. Even when Winfrid, the father of Christian civilization in Germany, set out from his home in Devonshire<sup>5</sup> to conduct the work on a more definite plan, aided by all the influence of the Frankish court, how scanty for a time was the success which he achieved! How often the opposition of some pagan chief, or the relapse of his converts into idolatry, or the lack of efficient helpers, convinced him that he must not despise the day of small things! And though he lived to cover central and western Germany with monasteries and schools, to consolidate the work of earlier missionaries, to witness the creation of episcopal sees in Bavaria and Thuringia, Hesse, and Franconia, yet the bloodstained copy of S. Ambrose on the "Advantage of Death," which was exposed for centuries to hosts of pilgrims in the monastery of Fulda, told how he won the martyr's crown amongst the natives of the shores of the Zuyder Zee,<sup>6</sup> just as a Patteson did the other day in Melanesia.

Nor did his loving disciples and successors<sup>7</sup> find the work less arduous, less liable to constant disappointment. The whole of the latter half of the eighth century is a record of alternate success and defeat. Now a fresh outpost is established, now it disappears before a desolating inroad of heathen Saxons. Now a church is built, now it is levelled with the ground by the same remorseless invaders; nor was it till with indomitable determination Charlemagne had pushed his conquests from the Drimel to the Lippe, from the Weser to the

<sup>1</sup> On the outward appearance of the Irish anchorites, see Reeves's *Adamnan*, p. 324; *The Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, vii. p. 303.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 678, 9.

<sup>3</sup> A.D. 690; Bede, *Ecl. Hist.* v. 9.

<sup>4</sup> A.D. 692, 696; *Vita S. Willibrordi*, *Art. SS. Bened.* Sæc. iii. p. 564; Bede, *Ecl. Hist.* v. 10.

<sup>5</sup> A.D. 718; *Vita S. Bonifacii*, Pertz's *Mon. Germ.* ii. p. 338.

<sup>6</sup> A.D. 755; Pertz *Mon. Germ.* ii. pp. 349—351.

<sup>7</sup> Gregory of Utrecht, Sturm of Fulda, Lebuin, Liudger, Willehad, and others.

Elbe, and thence to the shores of the Baltic, that the wild world of the eighth century could be lifted out of the slough of barbarism, and the civilizing work of intrepid missionaries could proceed with any real effect.<sup>1</sup>

(iv.) But let us pass on. The ninth century has dawned, and how much of Europe still remains to be evangelized? The whole of the great Scandinavian peninsula, all Bulgaria, Bohemia, Moravia, Russia, Poland, Pomerania, Prussia, and Lithuania. In most of these countries no missionary had ever set foot, or if he had, was obliged to retire at once before the furious opposition of heathen tribes.

I can conceive no more touching story of heroic efforts again and again made, and again and again crowned with utter disappointment than the story of Anskar, the intrepid apostle of Denmark and Sweden. In the year A.D. 826 he sets out on his great mission, and is regarded by every friend as little better than a visionary and a madman.<sup>2</sup> He establishes himself at Schleswig, he trains a few boys for a native ministry, and in three years he is obliged to fly for his life.

A few years later, and a letter written in Runic characters by a Swedish king, begging for Christian teachers, encourages the hope that Sweden might be won over to the cross. Anskar and a few companions undertake the long and perilous journey, to be robbed of everything by pirates in the course of the voyage across the Baltic, and to present themselves before the king at Birka, hungry, destitute, and nearly naked. A gleam of success attends their efforts. Not a few are baptized and a church is built, but no sooner does Anskar leave the country than the new religion falls into neglect; and twenty years later the people are so afraid of bringing down the wrath of their gods upon their own heads, that the missionaries are threatened with death unless they leave the country at once.

On Anskar's return to Germany the archbishopric of Hamburg is given him as a reward for his arduous labours, but he soon finds that what was intended to be a great outpost for Missionary operations in the North<sup>3</sup> contains itself but a very few Christians, and he is forced, like his few followers, to earn his scanty means of living by making nets and sails, "while a hut serves for his palace, and a shed for his cathedral."<sup>4</sup> Here, however, he continues to labour for a few years

<sup>1</sup> Palgrave's *Normandy and England*, i. 26; Sir J. Stephen's *Lectures*, i. 96.

<sup>2</sup> *Vita S. Anskarii*, Pertz's *Mon. Germ.* ii. pp. 690—725.

<sup>3</sup> Jaffe's *Regesta Pont. Rom.* p. 228.

<sup>4</sup> Adam Brem. i. 23; Otte's *Scandinavian History*, p. 33.

till an army of ferocious Northmen sack and plunder the town, and drive him forth a wanderer over his devastated diocese.

In A.D. 850 the clouds lift and a partial success crowns his efforts; but amidst the desolating inroads of the children of the North, who swarmed forth from their pine forests, creeks, and icebound lakes, to carry havoc into every inlet of the defenceless shores of Germany, France, and England, the spark of Christianity was only just kept alive; and *the first thirty years of the eleventh century* had passed away before the story of plundered churches, blazing villages, pillaged monasteries, came to an end, and the Northern Viking began to lay aside his old habits of lawless piracy,<sup>1</sup> and to respect civilized institutions, while churches and schools gradually arose, the old Runic characters gave place to the Latin alphabet, mills were erected, mines were opened, fields were tilled, and the religion of Woden and Thor retired more and more from a useless contest, as surely as we believe Brahmanism in India is slowly yielding before European science and European literature, before the telegraph and the railway, the book and the newspaper.

(v.) But, lastly, let us turn from the blue fiords of Scandinavia to the great Slavonian family of nations, whose wide territory extended from the Elbe to the sluggish waters of the Don, and from the Baltic to the Adriatic. Stubborn had been the contest between Christianity and Teutonic superstition. Still more stubborn was its contest with Slavonic belief in and worship of triple and many-headed deities, and with the Slavonic priesthood, as numerous and almost as potent as in the religious institutions of ancient Egypt or modern India.

The beacon-fire of Christian civilization may be said to have been first kindled in Bulgaria about the latter half of the ninth century,<sup>2</sup> thence it extended to Moravia, where eastern missionaries provided for the people a Slavonic Bible and a Slavonic liturgy;<sup>3</sup> thence to Bohemia, thence to the Scythian wilds and level steppes, where across the Russian kingdom of Runic the Norman, and where about the close of the tenth century the Eastern Church, "silently and almost unconsciously, bore into the world her mightiest offspring."<sup>4</sup>

But though the baptism of Vladimir, and the flinging of Slavonic idols into the waters of the Dnieper was a heavy blow to Slavonic

<sup>1</sup> See Worsac's *Danes and Northmen*, pp. 134—138.

<sup>2</sup> A.D. 861—864; Cedreni *Annales*, p. 443.

<sup>3</sup> Krasinski's *Lectures*, p. 36; Hardwick's *Church History, Middle Age*, p. 112, n.

<sup>4</sup> Mouravieff's *Church of Russia*, p. 7; Stanley's *Eastern Church*, p. 294.

superstitions, the struggle appeared at times almost hopeless in Poland, Lithuania, and the country of the Wends. In Pomerania nothing was really done till the year A.D. 1123, and then it was only by slow and painful stages that any progress was achieved. How slow it was may be estimated by the fact that it was not till the year A.D. 1168, when Becket was Archbishop of Canterbury, and Henry II. was on the English throne, that the gigantic, four-headed, image of Swantevit, in the temple of Arcona, the capital of the island of Rügen was destroyed by Bishop Absalom, of Roeskilde, in Denmark, and this Mona of the North was included within the advancing circle of Christian civilization.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, it is a fact, that seventy years afterwards, or as late as A.D. 1230, human sacrifices were still being offered up in Prussia and Lithuania in honour of Potrimpos, the god of corn and fruits, Picullos, the god of the nether world; while infanticide was so common that all the daughters in a family were frequently put to death; serpents and lizards were objects of worship; and male and female slaves were burnt with the dead bodies of their master, together with his horses, hounds, hawks and armour.<sup>2</sup>

It was now that the order of Teutonic Knights was formed, for the purpose of expelling the last remains of heathenism from the face of Europe; and, in spite of years of remorseless wars, the erection of castles, the foundation of towns, the planting of German colonies, the establishment of episcopal sees, serpent-worship was still dominant in Lithuania<sup>3</sup> as late as the middle of the fifteenth century, while amongst the Lapps, though successful missions had been inaugurated as early as A.D. 1335,<sup>4</sup> Christianity cannot be said to have become the popular religion till the sixteenth and even the seventeenth centuries.<sup>5</sup>

(vi.) Such, roughly and briefly, are the chief facts which a retrospect of the history of the conversion of Europe presents to our notice. When we survey them, it is impossible for us to plead the past in justification of impatience at the slow progress of modern missions.

<sup>1</sup> Saxo-Grammaticus, cap. xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Origines Livoniae*, p. 31; Peter de Dusburg, *Chronicon Prussiae*, pp. 72, 80.

<sup>3</sup> See Adam Brem, *De Situ Daniae*. "Dracones adorant cum volucris, quibus etiam vivos litant homines, quos a mercatoribus emunt, diligenter omnino probatos, ne maculam in corpore habeant." Compare also Aeneas Sylvius *De Statu Europæ*, cap. xxvi.

<sup>4</sup> More particularly in the time of Hemming, Primate of Upsala, A.D. 1335. See Hardwick, *Middle Age*, p. 314, and notes.

<sup>5</sup> Guericke, *Kirchengesch.*, ii. 355, 356; Hardwick, *Middle Age*, p. 314; Kurtz, *Christian Church*, p. 370.



(a.) The conversion of the old Roman Empire, commenced in Apostolic times, cannot be said to have been in any real degree completed before the year A.D. 395, and even then the single word "pagan," tells us how much had been left unaccomplished. The winning over of these British Isles, if we commence with the early missions of the Apostle of Ireland, was marked by a period of marvellous acceleration, followed by a period of no less singular retardation, and cannot be said to have been accomplished before the year A.D. 688. The conversion of Central and Northern Germany occupied at least two centuries. That of the Scandinavian nations commences in A.D. 800, and does not close before A.D. 1030; that of the Sclavonic family does not begin much before the tenth century, and does not terminate, as we have seen, if it can even be said to terminate then, before the fifteenth or sixteenth.

(b.) Slow, however, as was the rate of progress, there never was a period during these centuries when the flood was not really rising, though the unobservant eye might not detect it. In the darkest times there were ever some streaks of light, and the heaven destined to quicken the whole lump was never altogether inert or ineffectual. "Men are impatient and for precipitating things," but even in the Christianisation of the earth it is clear it is not God's way to give at once great results. "On the contrary," as has been well said, "He tries the faith and patience of His people by making them wait for the great day they are longing for, and, indeed, if it were not so, man's love would soon lose itself in the simple gratification of success. And inasmuch as God employs man to convert man, that in the process of conversion, the heart of the converter may be built up in the faith, it is needful for him that he should wait, and pray, and labour—that he should render himself up in self-sacrifice, still perhaps seeing little, but leaving his labour and his reward with his God."<sup>1</sup>

(c.) And if, as is apparent from the retrospect of the period under consideration, the dealings of God's providence are by gradual steps, if there is "a plan of things laid out, which, from the nature of it, requires various systems of means as well as length of time in order to the carrying out of its several parts into execution,"<sup>2</sup> it is clear that we are only deceiving ourselves when we compare sixty or seventy years of modern missionary work with the results that have been achieved by ancient missions in Europe. We overlook the fact that

<sup>1</sup> See *Speeches on Missions* of Bishop Wilberforce, edited by Rowley, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Butler's *Analogy*, part ii. chap. v.

it is *eighteen hundred and fifty years* of self-sacrifice, labour, prayer, and devotion which has produced the result we now see. Instead of comparing sixty or seventy years of modern missionary labour with the result of eighteen hundred years, if we would be fair and reasonable, we should compare them with sixty or seventy years out of the eighteen hundred, during which the Church was engaged in the same work in which she is engaged now.<sup>1</sup> *Revolutions of character in any race cannot come without many influences acting together, and acting not only for a long time, but often imperceptibly.*

(d.) Lastly, the history of the Conversion of Europe is full of encouragement as regards the future. Though, as we have seen, several tribes were converted by the sword, and by other methods than the holy lives and burning zeal of devoted missionaries, yet in a few centuries the Christian leaven wrought so mightily as to purify itself from the corruptions which had originally beset it, and to exert a power such as had never before been known in the world. "The indirect benefits which," as Livingstone remarks, "to a casual observer lie beneath the surface, and are inappreciable, in reference to the probable wide diffusion of Christianity at some future time, are worth all the money and labour that have been expended to produce them."<sup>2</sup> This was proved to be so again and again in the history of missions in Europe. Christianity attracted the hearts of men by the revelation of the Fatherhood of God; it proclaimed the glad tidings of His infinite love as displayed in the incarnation of His Eternal Son; it assuaged the sense of guilt by pointing to the sacrifice of the Cross; it strengthened the power of hope by bringing to light life and immortality. But at the same time the indirect benefits it conferred were inestimable. Slowly and gradually, it abolished the pagan curse of cruelty and slavery; it preserved and enriched the languages of Europe;<sup>3</sup> it lent new majesty to painting, music, sculpture; it called into being the ideal of the Christian family; it provided the humanizing machinery of Schools and Universities; it created what we now breathe, and know not we are breathing it, a Christian atmosphere.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bishop Wilberforce's *Speeches*, p. 248.

<sup>2</sup> Livingstone's *Travels*, p. 226.

<sup>3</sup> "How many languages, like the Gothic, Cornish, Old Prussian, Saxon and Bulgarian, are solely preserved in fragments of Scriptural and Ecclesiastical documents; how many more, like the German and English, have been fixed and elevated by versions of the Bible; how many more, of the deepest interest for the student of humanity, have been solely made known to us, in every region of the globe, by missionary research?"—FARRAR'S *Witness of History to Christ*, p. 180.

<sup>4</sup> See Comte, *Phil. Pos.* v. 439 quoted by Farrar, p. 183; Dean Church's *Influences of Christianity*, p. 132.

When did it seem less likely that such results could be achieved, in however long a space of time, than when a Cyprian, a Jerome, an Ambrose,<sup>1</sup> were brooding almost in despair over the irruption into the Empire of the strange Northern races, or when in the tenth century there went up from well-nigh every church and monastery in England, France, and Germany, the solemn cry, "*A furore Normannorum, libera nos, Domine.*" And yet what evil was ever more conspicuously turned to good? What untoward event was ever more clearly shown to be guided by the "Hand that guides the world"? Is it anything but cowardice to think that the mighty and beneficent powers which Christianity put forth in days gone by, have been suddenly arrested and crippled? Is it too much to believe that as there have been a Greek, a Latin, and a Teutonic Christianity so there shall *gradually* arise an Oriental Christianity, and an Oriental Theology?<sup>2</sup> We may answer the question by another—Who would have believed in the fifth century, that in the wild destroyers and supplanters of the ancient civilisation of Rome were "the fathers of a nobler and a grander world than any that history had yet known"?<sup>3</sup>

This wonderful transition is now a thing of the past. It is an accomplished fact. But it was a transition, which, as we have seen, lasted through centuries, and was slowly and gradually brought about. Shall we be surprised if in this matter of slow development History shall repeat itself?

In our eagerness for immediate, visible, results, it is well to remember that the price of haste is brief duration, that anything which ripens before its time withers before its time; that in all the works of God there is a conspicuous absence of all hurry; that if earthly seed is long in coming to perfection, Heavenly Seed is longer still.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Merivale's *Conversion of the Northern Nations*, Appendix L.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Benson's Sermon on *Missionary Efforts*, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Dean Church's *Influences of Christianity*, p. 99.

<sup>4</sup> See Dr. Vaughan's *Forget thine own People*, pp. 87, 88.

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